

Forest Recreation and Education

The Erie County Forestry Management Plan was developed using a multi-use approach that is focused on wildlife habitat, soil and water resource protection, harvest potential, recreational pursuits and educational opportunities. The following information, based upon data collected by Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc., seeks to highlight some of the



Covered bridge over Dresser Creek at Lot 1.

more unique educational opportunities that exist on selected Erie County Forest Lands.

Lot 1

Description: 200 acres of managed Hardwood Forests, Conifer Plantations, Shrublands, Dresser Creek and mowed Fields.

Unique Resources: Erie County Sugar Bush, Sugar Shanty, Saw Mill, Dining Area with Bathrooms, Warming Shelters and established Trail System.

Educational Opportunities: Erie County has been utilizing the resources of Lot #1 to conduct seasonal Maple Sugaring programs for local schools and the general public. During the past two years, Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc. has joined with the County to offer these programs. These resources have also proven to be well used by the public for a variety of other educational experiences such as the Erie County Harvest Festival, Envirothon (high school ecology competition) and a series of Interpretive Nature Programs.

Recommendations: Maintain and manage resources to enhance the Maple Sugaring operation and expand upon year round educational opportunities for schools, community groups and the general public of Erie County and all of Western New York.

Lot 2

Description: 852 acres of Hardwood Forests, Conifer Plantations, Dresser and Hyler Creeks, a two acre Pond, Beaver Meadows, Marshlands and Old Fields.

Unique Resources: The Woodlands Environmental Education Center, formally established in the Spring of 2001, was developed as a joint partnership between Erie County, Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc. and the University at Buffalo Environmental Studies Program. This property, along with the accompanying structures, was a former 4-H Camp (1965-1990) which had been in disuse for eleven years. The current structures, all requiring



At the Erie County Envirothon, students learn about forest management in the Sugar Bush at Lot 1.

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Sugar Shanty and Visitor Center at Lot 1.

renovation and/or reconstruction, include a Caretaker's residence and offices, Dining Hall/Kitchen, Nurse's Cottage, Barn, Shelter, established Trail System and an internal Road System.

Educational Opportunities: To develop a year-round environmental education center for the schools, community groups and the general public of Erie County and all of Western New York. Programs will be offered on a half day, full day or residential basis and will be conducted by Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc. and student interns from the University at Buffalo Environmental Studies Program.

Recommendations: To continue the development of the Woodlands Environmental Education Center and to eventually utilize this resource and its professional staff as a focal point from which to coordinate and implement a wide variety of environmental education programs at the Erie County Parks, Undeveloped Parks and Forest Lands.



Russell B. Fales Saw Mill at Lot 1. Russell served as Erie County Forester from 1938 to 1971.

Lot 3

Description: 329 acres of Hardwood Forests, Conifer Plantations and varied Wetlands.

Unique Resources: Established Trail System for Hiking and Cross Country Skiing along with an easy access Parking Area.

Educational Opportunities: This area provides excellent opportunities for year round environmental education programs. Established trails provide easy access into picturesque Hardwood and Conifer Forests.

Recommendations: To maintain the established Trail System and to include Lot #3 as a preferred Forest Land field site for a variety of ecology programs for the general public to be conducted by Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc.



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Students are given a demonstration at the Saw Mill.

Lots 5 and 11

Description: 265 acres (Lot 5) and 107 acres (Lot 11) of Hardwood Forests, Conifer Plantations and unique Wetlands.

Unique Resources: Lot 5 and 11 respectively, contain the Holland Bog and extensive Marsh/Pond Communities. Both possess Fire Breaks in good condition that provide effective access to these Wetland environments.

Educational Opportunities: These areas provide excellent opportunities for environmental education programs focused upon Wetland Ecology and Forest Management practices.

Recommendations: To include these Lots as preferred Forest Land field sites for a variety of ecology programs for the general public to be conducted by Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc.



Earth Spirit Ecologist Herb Burgasser teaches students about forest ecology at The Woodlands.

Lot 13

Description: 300 acres of Hardwood Forests, Conifer Plantations, Creeks and numerous man-made Marshes and Ponds.

Unique Resources: Mature Hardwood Forests, diverse species of Conifer Plantations and a variety of secluded Wetlands in various stages of succession.

Educational Opportunities:

This extensive area provides excellent opportunities for year round environmental education programs. Main Roads and Fire Breaks provide good access throughout this site.

Recommendations: To preserve the diverse habitats of this Lot as a secondary field site for The Woodlands Environmental Education Center. This area, easily accessible from The Woodlands, offers pockets of mature Hardwoods, varied species of Conifer Plantations and unique and secluded Wetland Communities for a variety of environmental education programs. Selected sites that border hidden ponds would also be excellent areas to establish primitive campsites with Adirondack Style lean-tos. The development of these structures would encourage primitive camping opportunities for the general public as well as formal programs for schools and community groups available through Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc.



Ecology Camp participants at The Woodlands built a rope crossing for a team-building exercise.



The pond at The Woodlands on Lot 2 provides an opportunity for students to learn about water quality and wildlife biology.

Recreation Activities:

Currently there are 1,385 acres (Lots 1, 2 and 3) of forest land available for recreation. Recreation on Lots 4-13 will be addressed in Phase II of the management plan. Recreation that is consistent in protecting the forest environment will be encouraged. Public use will be in balance with the forest's capacity to sustain these activities. Current multi-use recreational activities as well as activities prohibited by law are listed in the table below.

Activity	Season(s)	Allowed/ Prohibited	Comments
Hiking	All Year	Allowed	Over 7 miles of developed trails
Orienteering	When Season Permits	Allowed	Several events sponsored by local clubs take place annually (Boy Scouts, Buffalo Orienteering Club)
Cross Country Skiing	Winter	Allowed	Over 5 miles of trails maintained by Forestry Department
Snowmobiling	Winter	Allowed	Over 4 miles of trails maintained by local snowmobile clubs
Equestrian/Horseback Riding	When Season Permits	Allowed	Over 10 miles of trails maintained by equestrian clubs (trails were created from fire lanes)
Picnicking	All Year	Allowed	Picnic facilities at the Sugar Shanty and one-mile deep on Starbuck Trail
Bird Watching	All Year	Allowed	Abundant wildlife viewing opportunities exist
Education/Environmental Interpretation	All Year	Allowed	The Woodlands Environmental Education Center is located on Lot 2; many other opportunities exist for children and adults
Bow, Rifle, Trapping, and Shotgun Hunting	N/A	Strictly Prohibited	All types of hunting are forbidden by law
Fishing	N/A	Strictly Prohibited	Water use reserved for educational purposes
Motorized Vehicles	N/A	Strictly Prohibited	Not consistent with protecting forest environment
Camping	All Year	By Permit Only (for groups)	Expanded camping opportunities will be addressed in Phase II
Alcoholic Beverages	N/A	Prohibited	

Conclusion:

This Summary has focused upon some of the more unique Erie County Forest Lands with regard to their potential educational and recreational opportunities. These opportunities are currently being pursued as part of a Public Program Series offered through Earth Spirit Educational Services, Inc. during the Fall 2003 and Winter 2004. As a result of The Erie County Forestry Management Plan, new resources and enhanced educational and recreational opportunities are now being made available to the citizenry of Erie County and all of Western New York.

